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"New Successes of Soviet Astronomy in 1951"

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NEW SUCCESSES OF SOVIET ASTRONOMY IN 1951

Editors of
Astronomicheskii Zhurnal.

[Note: The following appeared as the opening article in the bi-monthly Astronomicheskii Zhurnal, Volume XXIX, No 1 (January/February 1952), pages 3-4.]

In 1951 astronomers of the Soviet Union were busy at work. All fields of astronomy and astrophysics were extended. The scientific activity of our astronomical observatories and institutes was expanded more and more. Construction of the Pulkovo Observatory is approaching its completion. As a result of post-war construction this famous observatory will be much more extensive in comparison with its previous size. Under construction are observatories in Crimea, Byurakan, Alma-Ata. In connection with the imminent completion of the construction of Moscow University at Leninskiye Gory [Lenin Hills], great possibilities are opened to the astronomers' of the Soviet metropolis.

Even now the pre-war level has been far surpassed in connection with the intensity of work and development of new methods of observations and theoretical investigations. New observatories on order, new instrument of Soviet manufacture, new laboratories - all these enable Soviet astronomers to raise their work to higher levels. It is the duty of astronomers to utilize to the full all those means of investigation which they obtain from the Soviet people.

Guided by the genius of I. V. Stalin, Soviet astronomers were directing in the past year their attention to the consideration and discussion of certain pressing problems. Among these the most apparent are problems of the origin

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of the Earth, planets and stars, which possess great significance for the development of scientific materialistic philosophy. The first great conference on the problems of cosmogony, held at Moscow, was devoted to the problem of origin of the Solar system and, particularly, the origin of the Earth. Besides astronomers, at this conference, geologists, geophysicists and geochemists also participated; thanks to this, the discussion of these problems was distinguished by great diversity. The conference showed that works on the cosmogony of the Solar system have been rapidly developing in the USSR and stated a number of important successes in this field. In addition, attention was directed to the weak sides of existing cosmogonical theories.

Three conferences of a more narrow nature were held the past year in preparation for a future extensive conference on problems of stellar cosmogony. One of these, in Kazan, was devoted to variable stars; the second, in Byurakan, discussed problems connected with stellar associations and distribution of hot giants in the Galaxy; and, finally, the third conference, held in at the very end of the year in Moscow, considered problems connected with gaseous nebulas. All these discussions took place in an atmosphere of business-like criticism and permitted the appearance of considerable successes and, in addition, revealed the unclarified positions and weak sides of investigations carried out on these problems.

During the past year the business of preparing new astronomical cadres has been considerably improved. ^{Many more} ~~A much greater quantity of~~ young astronomers have completed in good time their fellowships in observatories and institutes and have successfully defended their dissertations for the degree of candidate of science.

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The appearance of a great number of new textbooks, school equipment, and monographs has assisted the improved preparation of astronomical cadres. Among the texts published in 1951 we should especially note the book Course of Astrophysics and Stellar Astronomy [Kurs Astrofiziki i Zvezdnoy Astronomii], written by a collective of Pulkovo astronomers. The appearance of this book was an event in astronomical literature.

The astronomers of the Soviet Union during the past year have done much to strengthen the international cooperation of scientists. The handbooks and catalogs of variable stars and the annual "Ephemerids of Planetoids" [Efemeridy Malykh Planet] which were issued by Soviet astronomers for all astronomers of the world are a valuable contribution to this important work.

At the beginning of 1951 Soviet astronomers were engaged in the great work of preparing for the 8th Session of the International Astronomical Union at Leningrad in August 1951. This work was, however, disrupted as a result of unexpected and unprecedented decision of the Executive Committee of the International Astronomical Union to refuse to hold this session at Leningrad. The documents which show with maximum clarity that the disruption of the session at Leningrad was the result of actions not possessing anything in common with the interests of science and the aims of the International Astronomical Union have already been published in the Astronomicheskii Zhurnal.

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